

Assignment 4: Question, Reflect, Disrupt: YouTube

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YouTube is a global social media platform where individuals can consume and create content. Content is shared on YouTube for all to have access to and there are no barriers to accessibility, except for an internet connection and a device to operate the platform on. YouTube is powered by creators who consistently create and upload content in the form of videos onto the platform. As of 2024, there are currently 64 million YouTube content creators (Duarte, 2024). Content creators receive compensation for their work depending on the amount of views or ad revenue received from the video. YouTube was founded in 2005 and was made accessible worldwide on February 14th, 2024. Three former Paypal workers decided to create the platform, their names are Steven Chen, Chad Hurley, & Jawed Karim. They decided to create the platform because “They had the idea that ordinary people would enjoy sharing their “home videos.” (Hosch, 2024). They were right and within the first few months after launch hundreds of thousands began engaging with YouTube. YouTube is reliant on users engaging with the platform. Originally, the app was developed as a way to show home videos, since then it has exploded into a community which millions engage with daily. What makes YouTube unique is that users have access to multitudes of topics by simply inputting keywords into the search bar, similar to that of Google.

YouTube has been formed by the community. If those who engage on the app do not enjoy the content they are seeing they simply won't engage with the video, this allows creators to find patterns of what works and what does not work. Through trial and error, creators can build a personal community relating to their topic of interest where subscribers (YouTube viewers) can view it. What made YouTube stand out to us is the vast plethora of topics. Personally, we both have been benefiting from YouTube's educational content for our progression through our post-secondary careers. I have become reliant on certain creators for help in Math, English, and Economics. Not only that, YouTube has been our go to for learning golf, a sport neither of us have a background in, I also often reference YouTube for mechanical advice while working on my car. What makes YouTube interesting is that you cannot simply search for how to solve (Insert math problem here) and get an exact answer. Instead, you can find videos relating to the topic. And from engaging with the material, you are able to learn how to do different questions which builds a further understanding of the topic. This is helpful because unlike a textbook it is a visual type of learning which we both find tailor better to our learning styles. From there we can then apply it to our questions at

hand. YouTube can help you effectively because, for example, unlike Chegg, you are not shown the answer, so you still must teach yourself in some capacity and think about the content critically. It is further helpful when the creators share their thoughts and tricks similar to that of a professor.

[Question]

Furthermore, it is important to question who you are learning from. There are no verified accounts with certified teachers that the platform backs, this does not mean that the creators are not educated or held in high standing, it is simply a platform where anyone can post. It is an incredibly large community of 64 million creators, therefore, it is the user's job to cycle through and self-identify what content can be helpful. YouTube isn't perfect concerning easy accessibility. YouTube offers a plethora of accessibility options. Users can alter the playback speed, you can turn on closed captioning, increase or decrease the size of the player, alter the quality of the video, as well as turn on annotations. They can also react and engage with the content by liking the video and leaving a comment. One aspect that YouTube succeeds in is its ability to transform any video into another language. To do so you simply click the settings icon, go to subtitles and there you will be able to choose either subtitles in the preferred language or an auto-generated voice in your preferred language. A frustration associated with YouTube is that you are unable to download and watch content offline unless subscribed to YouTube Premium which is associated with a monthly membership fee. This means you cannot download and save the content for free which brings into question why not. Another question we have is why is YouTube not recommended more by teachers when there is so much information on it. Is it because YouTube does not have an educational standing?

A large drawback with learning on YouTube is that it is for the most part asynchronous. Similar to MOOCs, Forbes posted an article "The depressing and Disheartening News About MOOCs" where they discuss the results of a study showing a decrease in participation as time went on. Would this persist with YouTube being asynchronous as it is difficult to discuss with creators. The only given method of communication is by leaving comments and hoping either the creator itself or a peer in the community will respond. We questioned whether this could be solved, and one possibility

that we will speak about later is a community based messaging centre (social network) where those who actively engage with the content can ask questions and start discussions with their peers.

Despite the educational availability on YouTube, one cannot get recognized for attaining knowledge via this learning tool (ex. a certificate). With that in mind, we question “why can’t someone attain recognition for their knowledge attained”? And “how can someone get that recognition”?

Reflection/Questioning:

After contemplating this topic, the same issue kept arising; YouTube cannot give out certificates, degrees, etc. because the users of YouTube learning face no fees beyond YouTube Premium. In short, YouTube is not a recognizable educational institution. In order for this institution to be recognized, YouTube learning would have to be further monetized, but this completely ignores the aspects of accessible and distributive open learning. LinkedIn offers “LinkedIn Learning” where you can take asynchronous courses and upon completion receive a certificate, the issue is that LinkedIn Learning is not free. We can see that YouTube has continuously implemented changes to the platform in the form of advertisements. YouTube has had revisions and innovation with regard to advertisement on the platform. After the launch in 2005 by 2007 the first “In-video” advertisements began appearing on the site allowing for the viewer to click on them and be taken to an additional web browser (Holmes, New Digital Age). After the first implementation of in-video ads in 2008 a revision was announced where viewers were not given the option to watch the ad before or after playing the video they selected. Since then YouTube has signed with multiple different advertisement companies and jacked up the frequencies of ads. The issue with this is that creators will earn more if they riddle their videos with more pop up ads. YouTube knows if they incentivise creators to implement more ads with additional earnings they will do so, resulting in higher profits for YouTube. Now watching a video you may be faced with multiple minute long unskippable videos frequently interrupting the video and enjoyment associated with it. It seems as YouTube grows so does the capitalist mentality, at the current point many users are opting for “YouTube Premium” which comes with an ad free platform

as well as the ability to download and save videos. This goes against the guidelines of free open access and instead encourages users to pay a fee in order to mitigate unwanted content.

When YouTube creates barriers to content by implementing cost associated memberships it takes away the accessibility to other users. It promotes a pay to improve regime where users can either pay for the best or settle, and use the free version receiving the same videos with less options and more obstructions. What is most problematic with this system in our eyes is that you are unable to download videos without paying for that service. This inhibits many people from using the app as they may not have access to the internet at all times. For example you may have a family computer you could take to an internet cafe to download videos to watch later. YouTube makes this impossible without paying a monthly fee. A large contributing factor to this issue is that society (at least in Western society), education can be looked at as profit seeking, especially in private schools. Parents will “donate” and depending on this “donations” size their child may be accepted. Even at a young age you have the option to pay for what is socially seen as a “better education”.

Education as a business has developed the societal belief that “a degree from a prestigious university may be of greater importance than the actual learning experience itself” (Katz, 2015). And because of this “education for profit” belief, the problem lies within the “foundation of the education sector’s desire for profit, and lack of consideration towards educational growth” (Katz, 2015). It seems as if there is an element of gatekeeping in relation to attaining recognizable education outside of free childhood education. Is this fair? The answer is no. Statistics Canada conducted a study and found that “undergraduate professional programs [...] which have higher tuition costs [...] are largely populated with students from affluent backgrounds” (Statistics Canada, 2023). Thus, the study also argues that “evidence suggests tuition differentiation may be acting as an exclusionary policy that reinforces social/class inequalities” (Statistics Canada, 2023). The moral of the story is; people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are not given the same opportunities educationally as people from higher socio-economic backgrounds, and that’s not right.

With this in-mind, a very important question arises: how can we bridge the gap between formal and informal learning regardless of one's socio-economic status in order to make education more inclusive and equitable.

Our Suggestion (Disrupt):

We'd like to propose the idea that YouTube learning would be recognized as attaining a new skill as opposed to being an equivalent of an undergraduate degree. These attained skills could aid in "getting your foot in the door" when it comes to entering careers which previously could only be done through attaining some form of degree or certificate or an outstanding GPA. Now these skills would not be an equivalent to a degree and/or certificate, but it would allow for recognition in terms of "this individual holds some form of recognizable knowledge related to the subject at-hand". Through the class material, we were taught that not everything needs to be graded to have the individual be considered as educated. Following this idea further we believe learning should not be confined to an institutionalised set of systems resulting in either you are educated or you are not. And instead see education and knowledge as a spectrum. In reality we see that this does not happen in practice and that those hiring look for a formal education and certified set of skills.

To give individuals qualifiable skills we believe it could be achieved through YouTube creators having their content recognized through an educational system, for example, (institutions name) deems (content creators name) work credible and recognizable in the realm of (the subject). Similar to how educational institutions allow a course from a different institution to be recognized as an equivalent credit once transferred. To put this idea into practice may be challenging, but it's a step in the right direction in solving the issues with open access education. Another possible way to go about implementing this idea could be some form of a submission that content creators have to submit so that they can have their content reviewed by an expert within the field, and if an expert deems their content to be acceptable learning material, their content can then be recognized as attainable skills and verified. If this plan were to work in practice without any hiccups, then it would solve the issue of accessibility to education as anybody would be able to attain a new skill that is recognizable. It would expand people's opportunities from a career standpoint, and by doing

so it would allow individuals who are truly passionate about a subject to be able to participate within those realms that they could not be a part of before.

Furthermore, we believe YouTube should implement a massive online social network within the existing framework. The social network would allow for peer and creator discussions. We believe that YouTube as it lacks communication accessibility, especially since the platform operates in the form of asynchronous videos. We believe a social network could increase user engagement and benefit from an education standpoint. The social network would be broken into open access communities relating to the specified field. In those communities users could post questions on topics they don't fully grasp to the community, through text, photo, or video, where other users would be able to private message them to start a conversation or reply to the thread in the main network.

The issue of how one would implement this system still remains, because a university and/or expert would unlikely review content for free, but programs such as “B.C. Access Grant” exist. With assistance through governmental bodies, it is possible to have some form of a grant that covers the costs associated with putting this idea into practice. It's important to note that no such program currently exists, but through cooperation and discussion, a possible solution could be found in terms of having some form of government funding so that everyone can access additional recognizable education.

We aimed to find possibilities where open education could become mainstream and globalised. The reality is although technological innovation is progressing at an exceptional rate, what we have access to in North America differs across the world. Westernised cities and communities have the infrastructure in place in order to mainstream these mass open online resources, our cities have the energy sector for it, communication lines, data banks, and service almost anywhere you go. What we need to keep in mind is that we come from a very privileged area and as of 2023 only 63% of the world had easy access to the internet (Ritchi, 2023). That being said, we have hope that this will change, and that it will lead to global connections within the communication and education industries.

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